Washington National Guard
Sexual Assault Prevention and Response

Bystander Intervention Theory and Skills

Transforming Values into Action
by Fostering Bystander
RESPONSE ABILITY

Alan Berkowitz 2009

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What is the greatest asset of the Armed Services?

The values and ideals of its service members

Service Members care and want to do what is right

Most male service members are uncomfortable with negative treatment of women

What is a bystander?

A bystander is someone who “stands by” and does not do anything when they notice a problematic situation or behavior even though they may find the behavior to be problematic.

For almost every health and social justice problem facing the military, there are bystanders

Outline

- The role of bystander behavior in ending harassment and violence
- Theory and research on bystander behavior
- Social norms and bystander behavior
- A model for bystander interventions -when and how?
- Teaching others to intervene -bystander intervention skills
- Placing bystander intervention within a bigger prevention picture

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Key Points

- Bystanders are in a position to intervene to prevent sexual harassment and sexual assault and shift the climate that permits them
- Service members can be taught to overcome their inhibitions to intervene
- Service members can be taught skills to intervene effectively
- Service members underestimate the willingness of other soldiers to "be part of the solution"

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Process and Context

- Learning to intervene effectively is a gender-neutral skill that we can all develop
- The best context for learning this skill is in a culturally specific, homogeneous environment (especially in terms of gender and rank) and requires practice
- Attempts to intervene bring to the surface personal challenges and past hurts that require healing and practice to overcome

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Different Situations May Require a Different Type of Intervention

- With same-rank peers
- With subordinates
- With superiors

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Pair Exercise

Share bystander situations that we have personally experienced while in the Military

Understanding Bystander Behavior: Why People Don't Intervene

Stages of Bystander Behavior

- Notice the event
- Interpret it as a problem
- Feel responsible for dealing with it
- Have the necessary skills and resources to act

Reasons for Bystander Behavior

- Assume that it isn't a problem because other's don't intervene (social influence)
- Fear of embarrassment (audience inhibition)
- Assume that someone else will do something (diffusion of responsibility)
- Believe that others' aren't bothered (social norms)
- Fear of retaliation

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Misperceived Norms and Bystander Behavior

- Individuals are more likely to express prejudices when they believe that others share them
- Students are bothered by problem behaviors but underestimate other student's discomfort with them*
- Students want someone to intervene but underestimate other students' desire to have something done*
- Student leaders underestimate their peers desire to have them intervene*
- Intervention is more likely when others are perceived as willing to intervene
- The biggest influence on men's willingness to intervene to prevent a sexual assault is whether men think other men are willing to intervene
- Men who are prone to rape are more likely to do so when they incorrectly think that other men adhere to rape myths

**From a pilot study conducted at Northern State University on bystander behavior in relation to problem behaviors resulting from alcohol use*

Conclusion

Underestimating other's concern results in less chance of intervening on the part of bystanders (*pluralistic ignorance*)

Overestimating other's comfort with harassment and violence results in more chance of perpetrating (*false consensus*)

Intervention Options and Skills

Intervention Options

- Direct versus Indirect: Talk to the person directly or to the others who are present
- On the spot or later: Do something right away or wait
- Types of interventions
  - Leave, don't do anything, take care of yourself
  - Confront the person/impose consequences/share feelings
  - Shift the focus (change the situation)
  - Shift the person (change the person)
- *Goal: To have more options for responding and feel better about your response*

Interventions Requiring a Confrontation

- It may be necessary to let someone know that certain behaviors and/or remarks are not appropriate and will not be tolerated.

- Some individuals may have the responsibility to act as an enforcer in certain situations. An intervention of this type can be called a confrontation.

- A confrontation can also occur when feelings and reactions to a behavior are shared, with or without authority

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Shifting the Focus(Changing the Situation)

- Non-participation
- Deflection (change the subject)
- Shift the focus

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Options for Intervening with Superiors

- Enabling, colluding, joining (encourages the behavior)
- Non-participation-avoid the subject/incident or ignore
- Respond to the remark gently and indirectly by “shifting the focus”

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“Shifting Attitudes” (Changing the Person)

- Is non-confrontational
- Helps the person understand *why* the behavior is problematic
- Fosters deeper change

(www.ncbi.org)

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Components of Shifting Attitudes

- Take care of yourself
- Always give respect to the person
- Notice what increases or decreases defensiveness
- Look for the “ouch” underneath
- Engage in “open talk”

The Bigger Picture: Creating a Comprehensive Program

Questions to Ask

What attitudes or behaviors do we want to discourage, inhibit or prevent?

What attitudes or behaviors do we want to encourage, increase or facilitate?

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Overall Strategy

To develop mutually reinforcing programs that create synergy between each other and foster a comprehensive environment of change that minimizes the chances of harassment and violence

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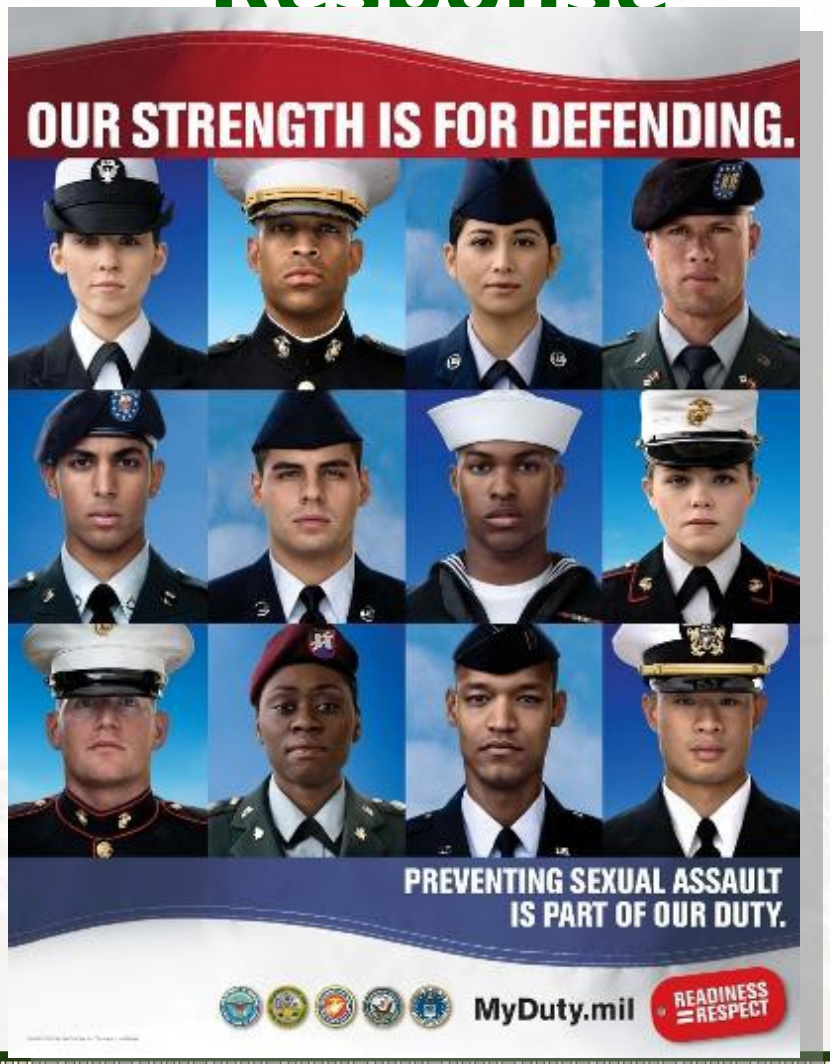

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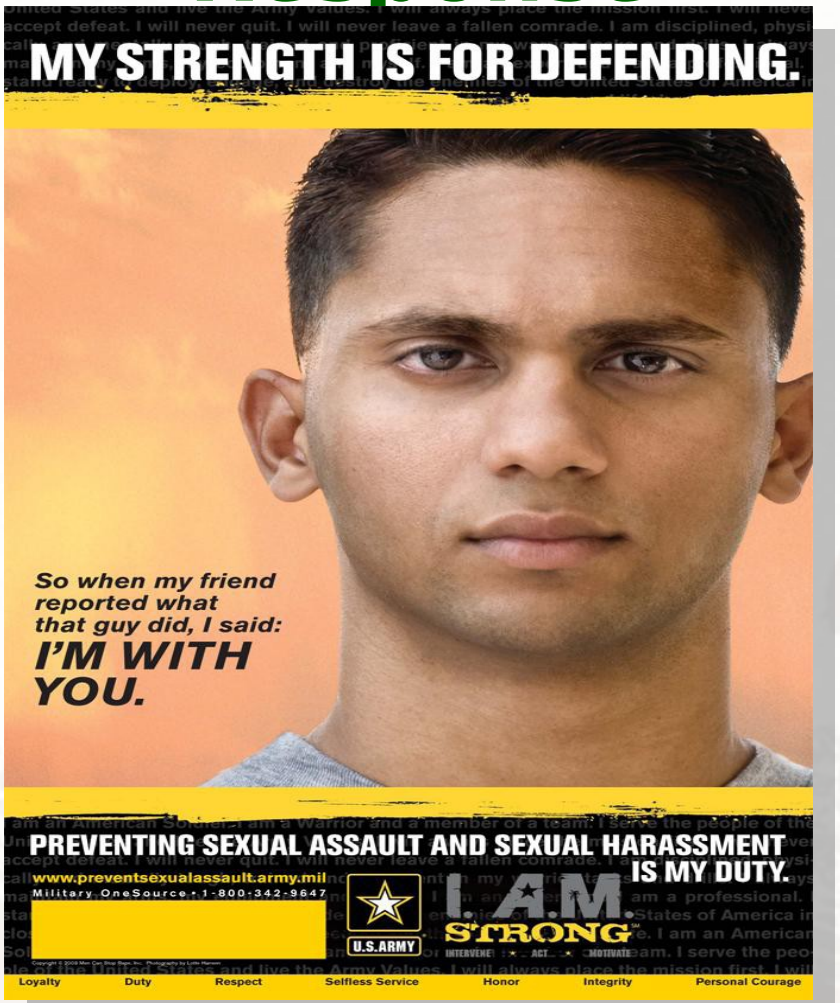
MY STRENGTH IS FOR DEFENDING.
So when my friend reported what that guy did, I said:
I'M WITH YOU.
PREVENTING SEXUAL ASSAULT AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT IS MY DUTY.
www.preventsexualassault.army.mil
Military OneSource • 1-800-342-9647
U.S.ARMY
I.A.M. STRONG
INTERVENE ★ ACT ★ MOTIVATE
Loyalty Duty Respect Selfless Service Honor Integrity Personal Courage